

the backs of the patient's hands. These alternative techniques seem to work as well as the original eye movement procedure.

It is common for people to experience strong emotions during and after EMDR sessions, so it is important for the client to give the therapist accurate information about what is happening at these times. EMDR sessions should ideally be scheduled at times when the client will not be going into a highly demanding situation right after the session. In addition, it is important that the client not leave the therapist's office until s/he feels grounded and calm. Sometimes the client will want to remain in the waiting room for a few minutes in order to make sure things feel settled before leaving. If upsetting feelings or images come to mind in between sessions, clients are asked to keep a log of this material to bring to the next session. The therapist is available by telephone if necessary.

Is EMDR effective?

Over 15,000 clinicians have been trained to use EMDR over the last ten years, and a number of people are conducting research programs to see how effective it is in addressing various problems. So far, the results are promising, with convincing evidence of its effectiveness with people who have Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). EMDR has been recognized as an effective treatment for PTSD in the Treatment Guidelines of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. Therapists have sometimes reported good results in using EMDR with people who have phobias, dissociative disorders, and other problems, but there are no controlled studies yet.

Department of Psychology

Thomas Moore Health Clinic

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Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Important Phone Numbers

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Treating Trauma with EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing



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What is EMDR?

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) is a technique that has been developed in recent years to help people come to terms with overwhelming or traumatic experiences.

The Theory behind EMDR...

People who have had traumatic or overwhelming experiences sometimes return to feelings, images, sounds, and body sensations that they connect with those experiences. For some people, there are times when they seem to relive past situations and feelings with the intensity they may have felt long ago. The experience of reliving past events may even become intrusive into daily life or sleep. For some people, it seems as if some experiences have become "locked" in the nervous system in vivid and disturbing ways. EMDR aims to "unlock" the nervous system so that the brain can process the experiences and move on.



The Process of EMDR...

The therapist helps the client to identify upsetting images, beliefs, body sensations, and emotions that are connected with the disturbing experiences, then leads the client through an eye movement procedure that often helps the client to begin coming to terms with the experience in a new way. The eye movement procedure seems to stimulate resources on both sides of the brain that often facilitate emotional healing. The client remains in control of the process.

Clients are also asked to identify positive beliefs about themselves that they would like to have as a result of coming to terms with their experiences. The process often helps clients to own those positive beliefs.

EMDR is not like hypnosis in its methods, and most clients who have experienced both will report that it feels quite different from hypnosis. EMDR is a technique that fits well into many kinds of psychotherapy, but it is not designed to replace traditional therapy.

Remember...

Clients should not assume that everything recollected during EMDR is completely factual. Researchers and therapists have long known that human memory is not like a video recorder that plays back exactly what happened. Like any memory, remembered traumatic experiences may be factual to the last detail, or may mix fact and fanta-

sy. Neither the therapist nor anyone else can tell if a memory is factual unless there is additional information available. Therefore, if you have any questions about whether a memory is factual, you are encouraged to do your own investigation and share your findings with your therapist.

Sometimes people will remember new incidents during EMDR that are previously unknown to them, or they may remember new details about a well-known memory. As stated above, these new memories should not be assumed to be 100% factual, although they may be.

The client always has the ability to stop EMDR at any time, for any reason. There are also times when it makes sense for the therapist to put the procedure aside permanently or temporarily and continue therapy as usual.

Are there potential risks in using EMDR?

There are no documented cases of harmful effects of EMDR. Like any treatment, it can be misused. Clients should not try to do EMDR at home, nor should they permit themselves to receive EMDR treatment from any therapist who has not received training in the procedure.

For some people, the eye movement procedure causes mild eye discomfort or dizziness. If this happens, the therapist uses other techniques that alternately stimulate both sides of the brain, such as gently tapping on